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THE GARDEN CALENDAR.

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★ JAN 30 1932 ★

A radio talk by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in Agriculture the Department of Agriculture period, National Farm and Home Hour, January 5, 1932, through a network of 46 associate NBC stations.

Well folks, I started something by my talk about "Star Boarder" fruit trees two weeks ago today, and I have received a number of inquiries about the renovation of orchards, and the working over of unprofitable fruit trees to desirable varieties. Since I gave that talk, a reprint of Farmers' Bulletin No. 1284 on Apple-Orchard Renovation has been issued, and this bulletin tells the story very completely so far as apples are concerned. As I pointed out, there are literally thousands of unprofitable fruit trees in both home orchards and commercial orchards. The practicability of working over these unprofitable trees will depend upon their condition. If the trees are in good, healthy condition, and it is merely a matter of changing the variety, the problem is not difficult, but if the trees are in a run-down condition, are on poor soil, their pruning has been neglected, it may not pay to go to the necessary trouble or expense of reconditioning them, and it may be better to plant new trees. Farmers' Bulletin No. 1284, that I mentioned a moment ago, gives very explicit directions for the renovation of apple orchards - then we have similar literature on other fruits, including the citrus fruits, as grown in the Gulf Coast region.

Pruning is the first step in the care of fruit trees, and now is the time to prune all deciduous trees wherever the weather permits. The main object of pruning is to reduce the number of fruit buds on the trees, and thereby control the set of fruit, so as to produce good size and quality. Left to itself, the tree will put on too many fruits, with the result that the fruit is small, poorly colored, and of inferior quality. Pruning is one way of controlling the set of fruit, and securing size, while thinning is another. For best results, we should first prune to the best of our ability, then thin the fruit wherever necessary to still further regulate the number of fruits on each tree.

Where pruning has been neglected for two or three years, and the trees have grown high into the air, it may be necessary to adopt drastic measures to get them back to a reasonable height at which their tops can be reached with an ordinary sprayer, and the fruit can be gathered by means of ordinary picking ladders. How often we see apple trees in home or farm orchards that have shot up to a height of 30 or 40 feet, and with most of the fruiting wood on the top branches. Another point is to prevent the trees becoming too thick and brushy. With the right kind of pruning, an apple tree should not be so dense as to prevent your seeing daylight through it in places. At the same time, the bearing wood should be distributed to all parts of the tree, including the middle. Many persons make the mistake of cutting all of the fruiting spurs from the middle of the tree under the mistaken notion that the fruit must be borne on the outside where it will get sunshine. If the head of the tree is kept open as it should be, plenty of sunshine will reach the fruit in all parts of the tree.

Peaches call for even more severe pruning than apples in order to regulate the bearing wood. If left unpruned a peach tree will develop long, weak branches

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and one of the main points to consider in pruning peaches is to develop strong, stocky branches and an open top, just the opposite to the natural tendency. I know of peach orchards in which the trees are 16 to 20 years old and yet their pruning has been so handled that the fruit can all be picked by the aid of a 5-foot step ladder.

Farmers' Bulletin No. 917 on Growing Peaches contains a lot of information and some good illustrations that show the proper methods of pruning. This bulletin also describes the methods of renovating peach trees that have gotten out of bounds and need heading back and reshaping. It is Farmers' Bulletin No. 917.

For those of you who are interested primarily in your home fruit plantings I would recommend Farmers' Bulletin No. 1001 on Growing Fruit for Home Use. This bulletin briefly covers all of the fruits that are commonly grown for home use and includes lists of varieties that are adapted to the various sections. Any of you who happen to live in the Great Plains Area should ask for Farmers' Bulletin No. 727 instead of 1001. You folks who live in the Gulf States and are interested in growing citrus fruits should ask for Farmers' Bulletin No. 1343 on the general culture of citrus fruits.

Now you will note that I have dwelt at some length upon this matter of pruning in order to emphasize its importance. I know from my own experience that unless you do your pruning fairly early that it is liable to be neglected. Right on the heels of pruning comes the dormant spraying of deciduous fruits and if we do not watch our step spring will catch some of us before we have our pruning and dormant spraying done.

Perhaps I had better repeat the numbers of the bulletins that I have mentioned:

Farmers' Bulletin No.	1284,	Apple-Orchard Renovation.
"	"	" 917, Growing Peaches.
"	"	" 1001, Growing Fruit for Home Use.
"	"	" 727, Growing Fruit for Home Use in the
		Great Plains Area.
"	"	" 1343, Culture of Citrus Fruits in the
		Gulf Coast States.

My thought is that if we are growing fruit either for home use or for sale, let's do it right and have good fruit.